IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 12 and 23 to read as follows. Note that all claims currently pending in this application, including those presently being amended, have been reproduced below for the Examiner's convenience.

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1. (Currently Amended) An information retrieval apparatus comprising:

calculation means for calculating the degree of coincidence between a search condition being input and each information to be retrieved in said database;

determination means for determining, on the results of retrieval respectively for the plural information to be retrieved of a high degree of coincidence, the output feature amount of each result of retrieval according to each degree of coincidence; and

output means for outputting said results of retrieval with an output mode in a manner that information having a higher degree of coincidence is output in a larger size at a position closer to a center of an output part based on each output feature amount.

2. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

said database stores language information in respective correspondence with each of said information to be retrieved; and

said calculation means is adapted to execute language analysis of said retrieval condition entered by a natural language, thereby calculating a degree of language

coincidence between the result of said language analysis and the language information assigned to each information to be retrieved.

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3. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said output feature amount is a size of the output, and said determination means is adapted to determine a larger output size for a result of a higher degree of coincidence.

4. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said retrieval result is an image, and said output size is a size of the image.

5. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said retrieval result is a text, and said output size is a character size of the text.

6. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said retrieval result is audio data, and said output size is a loudness thereof.

7. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said retrieval result is an image or a text, and said output feature amount is a display position, and wherein said determination means determines the display

position so as to be closer to a specified position for a retrieval result of a higher degree of coincidence.

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8. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said specified position is a center of a display area.

9. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said determination means determines a distance from said specified position according to said degree of coincidence and determines the display positions of the retrieval results in positions at said determined distances so as to minimize mutual overlap of the retrieval results.

10. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means determines the output feature amount of each retrieval result, for each of the retrieval results corresponding to the information to be retrieved of a predetermined number in a descending order of the degree of coincidence.

11. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means determines the output feature amount of each retrieval result for each of the retrieval results corresponding to the information to be retrieved having degrees of coincidence exceeding a predetermined threshold value.

12. (Currently Amended) An information retrieval method comprising:

a calculation step of calculating the degree of coincidence between a search condition being input and each information to be retrieved in said database;

a determination step of determining, on the results of retrieval respectively for the plural information to be retrieved of a high degree of coincidence, the output feature amount of each result of retrieval according to each degree of coincidence; and

an output step of outputting said results of retrieval with an output mode in a manner that information having a higher degree of coincidence is output in a larger size at a position closer to a center of an output part based on each output feature amount.

13. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 12, wherein:

said database stores language information in respective correspondence with each of said information to be retrieved; and

said calculation step is adapted to execute language analysis of said retrieval condition entered by a natural language, thereby calculating a degree of language coincidence between the result of said language analysis and the language information assigned to each information to be retrieved.

14. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 12, wherein said output feature amount is a size of the output, and said determination step is adapted to determine a larger output size for a result of a higher degree of coincidence.

15. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 14, wherein said retrieval result is an image, and said output size is a size of the image.

16. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 14, wherein said retrieval result is a text, and said output size is a character size of the text.

17. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 14, wherein said retrieval result is audio data, and said output size is a loudness thereof.

18. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 12, wherein said retrieval result is an image or a text, and said output feature amount is a display position and said determination step determines the display position so as to be closer to a specified position for a retrieval result of a higher degree of coincidence.

19. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 18, wherein said specified position is a center of a display area.

20. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 18, wherein said determination step determines a distance from said specified

position according to said degree of coincidence and determines the display positions of the retrieval results in positions at said determined distances so as to minimize mutual overlap of the retrieval results.

21. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 12, wherein said determination step determines the output feature amount of each retrieval result, for each of the retrieval results corresponding to the information to be retrieved of a predetermined number, in a descending order of the degree of coincidence.

22. (Previously Amended) An information retrieval method according to claim 12, wherein said determination step determines the output feature amount of each retrieval result for each of the retrieval results corresponding to the information to be retrieved having degrees of coincidence exceeding a predetermined threshold value.

23. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium storing an information retrieval program for controlling a computer to perform information retrieval, said program comprising codes for causing the computer to perform:

a calculation step of calculating the degree of coincidence between a search condition being input and each information to be retrieved in said database;

a determination step of determining, on the results of retrieval respectively for the plural information to be retrieved of a high degree of coincidence, the output feature amount of each result of retrieval according to each degree of coincidence; and

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an output step of outputting said results of retrieval with an output mode in a manner that information having a higher degree of coincidence is output in a larger size at a position closer to a center of an output part based on each output feature amount.